Stoned in a Park

Bill will mark park a national AIDS monument

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A San Francisco AIDS memorial is set to become the first congressionally sanctioned national AIDS monument in the country. In March, California Rep. Nancy Pelosi sponsored legislation to declare the 15 acres of dogwood trees, lilies and swamp irises in Golden Gate Park, known as the AIDS Memorial Grove, a national memorial. Sen. Dianne Feinstein sponsored a Senate version in August.

The bill, which is likely to be voted on this term, is not expected to be controversial because it requires no federal funding. Since its inception in 1988, the grove-borrowed from the city via a 99-year renewable lease-has been maintained entirely by private donations. “We believe all federal AIDS money should go to research, prevention and education,” said Kerry Enright, executive director of the grove. “We don’t ever want to take money away from that.” The point of making it a national monument is “to remind people that AIDS is indeed a war in which we’ve lost more Americans than in Vietnam,” she said.

Armistead Maupin and Calvin Klein are among those who have purchased $1,000 spaces in the grove’s “Circle of Friends,” a flagstone circle of 2,200 names of people felled by AIDS.

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